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THE SEEMINGLY LIMITLESS EXPANSE OF THE WESTERN DESERT WAS A TACTICIAN'S PARADISE WHERE ARMOURED FORMATIONS MANOEUVRED AND CLASHED LIKE ARMADAS OF OLD. WHERE SMALL MOBILE COLUMNS OF DETERMINED MEN HARRIED THE ENEMY, WREAKED HAVOC OUT OF all PROPORTION TO THEIR STRENGTH BEFORE WITHDRAWING INTO THAT SEA OF SAND.

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Chapter 1. Tactics of Death

IMPUDENTLY, THE LIGHTLY ARMED BRITISH TANKS TROUNCED THE ITALIAN ARMOUR BUT THE MIGHTY PANZERS OF THE AFRIKA KORPS WERE OF FAR DIFFERENT METTLE. AMONG THE FIRST TO LEARN THAT BITTER LESSON WAS LIEUTENANT JOHNNIE GRENVILLE, COMMANDING A VALENTINE TANK IN A HUSSAR SQUADRON.

SO THOSE ARE JERRY PANZERS! ONE THING'S CLEAR, AT LEAST - THEY CARRY A BIGGER GUN THAN WE DO!

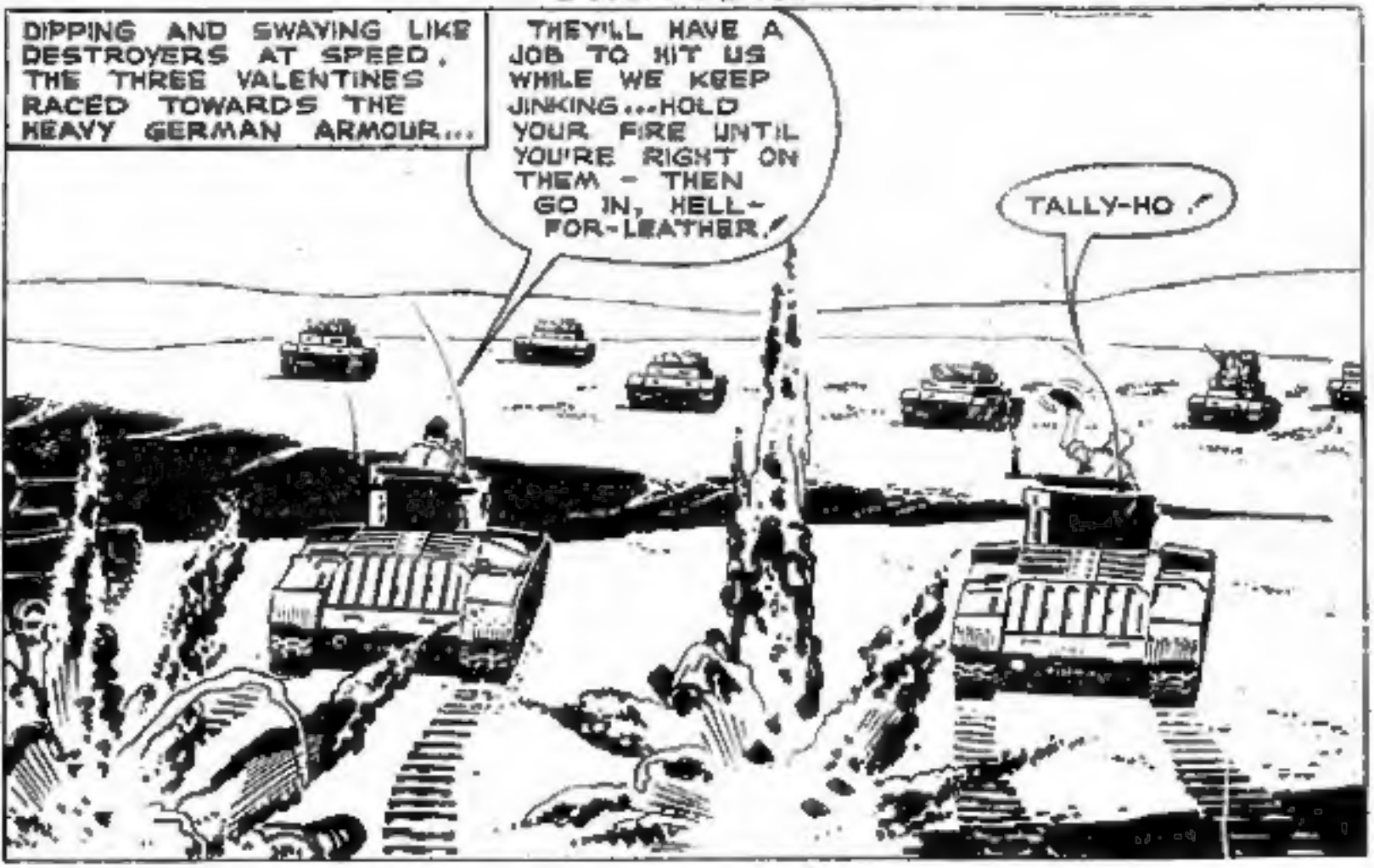
SHALL I OPEN FIRE, SIR?

THEY'RE OUT OF RANGE OF OUR PEASHOOTER - AND EVEN IF THEY WEREN'T, I RECKON OUR SHELLS WOULD JUST BOUNCE OFF 'EM!

JOHNNIE GRENVILLE WAS A MAN OF QUICK DECISION, WITH THAT RARE SIXTH SENSE WHICH ENABLED HIM TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE SUICIDALLY FOOLHARDY AND THE IMPUDENTLY DARING.

THOSE SQUAREHEADS KNOW WE'RE OUTGUNNED AND OUTNUMBERED - SO THE LAST THING THEY'LL EXPECT IS FOR US TO ATTACK!

ADVANCE!


DIPPING AND SWAYING LIKE DESTROYERS AT SPEED, THE THREE VALENTINES RACED TOWARDS THE HEAVY GERMAN ARMOUR...
THEY'LL HAVE A JOB TO HIT US WHILE WE KEEP JINKING...HOLD YOUR FIRE UNTIL YOU'RE RIGHT ON THEM - THEN GO IN, HELL-FOR-LEATHER!
TALLY-HO!

THE BRITISH TANKS DISAPPEARED INTO A SLIGHT HOLLOW. THEN, BEFORE THE BEWILDERED GERMANS REALISED WHAT WAS HAPPENING, SHELLS WERE SLAMMING INTO THEIR HULLS AT POINT-BLANK RANGE.
THAT'S THE STUFF! GO STRAIGHT THROUGH 'EM - THEN 'BOUT SHIP AND RAKE 'EM FROM THE OTHER SIDE!

THE LUMBERING GERMAN MONSTERS SWUNG BLINDLY AROUND - BUT ALREADY THE FAST BRITISH TANKS HAD SWEPT PAST AND WERE HITTING THEM WITH MURDEROUS ACCURACY FROM THE OTHER FLANK.

THE SHATTERED WRECKS OF SIX PROUD GERMAN HEAVY TANKS WERE LEFT ON THE BATTLEFIELD AS THE SQUADRON TURNED JUBILANTLY AWAY TO REJOIN THE MAIN ARMOURED COLUMN.
WHAT A GLORIOUS SCRAP, JOHNNIE! THAT'S THE DRILL WITH THESE BIG GERMAN BRUTES - GET IN CLOSE - AND GET IN QUICK!
YES, BUT I WONDER IF OUR BRASS-HATS WILL AGREE?

JOHNNIE'S FEARS WERE WELL-FOUNDED - AS HE DISCOVERED WHEN HE MADE HIS REPORT AT BRIGADE H.Q.

THESE GERMAN TANKS CAN BLAST US OFF THE DESERT, WEIGHT FOR WEIGHT, SIR. OUR BEST BET IS TO LET TANKS OPERATE INDEPENDENTLY IN ACTION, AND GET TO CLOSE QUARTERS QUICKLY!

THANK YOU, GRENVILLE - BUT I THINK I AND MY STAFF ARE BETTER QUALIFIED TO DECIDE TACTICS THAN YOU! AND BY THE WAY, NEXT TIME YOU REPORT TO ME, YOU MIGHT TRY TO LOOK A LITTLE MORE LIKE A HUSSAR OFFICER!

OUTSIDE THE BRIGADE TENT, JOHNNIE FOUND HIS PAL, LIEUTENANT TOM AIKEN WAITING . . .

WELL, JOHNNIE - ARE WE GOING TO FIGHT YOUR WAY AND BELT THE DAYLIGHTS OUT OF JERRY?

NOT A CHANCE! HE WAS MORE CONCERNED BECAUSE I'D GOT A BUTTON UNDONE.

AT A BRIGADE CONFERENCE LATER THAT NIGHT, JOHNNIE LISTENED TO THE HIDEBOUND BRIGADIER'S ORDERS WITH FOREBODING . . .

REMEMBER, GENTLEMEN, I EXPECT YOU TO KEEP FORMATION AT ALL COSTS...THERE IS TO BE NO INDEPENDENT ACTION! COMBINED FIRE-POWER IS THE ANSWER TO THESE HUNS.

IT WAS A FEW DAYS BEFORE THE REGIMENT HAD ITS FIRST FULL-SCALE ENCOUNTER WITH THE GERMAN PANZERS...
YES, SIR - THEY'RE HUN TANKS RIGHT ENOUGH.
GIVE THE ORDER TO ADVANCE - AND REMEMBER, THE REGIMENT WILL KEEP FORMATION!

THE TANKS ADVANCED AS IF ON REVIEW ON SALISBURY PLAIN. ON THE EXTREME RIGHT WING, JOHNNIE GRENVILLE GROUND HIS TEETH SAVAGELY AS THE GERMANS OPENED UP WITH ACCURATE, LONG DISTANCE FIRE...
IT'S SHEER MURDER! WE'LL BE PICKED OFF LONG BEFORE WE GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO HAVE EVEN A CRACK AT THEM!

A FEW HUNDRED YARDS TO THE RIGHT, JOHNNIE'S TRAINED DESERT EYES NOTICED A SLIGHT RIDGE LEADING STRAIGHT TOWARDS THE ENEMY POSITION . . .
DRAGON-FLY TO SCORPION . . . THERE'S A LONG RIDGE ON MY RIGHT. IF WE MOVE TO THE OTHER SIDE OF IT, WE COULD ADVANCE HULL DOWN - IT WOULD EVEN THINGS UP A BIT.
YOU WILL ADVANCE AS ORDERED - IN FORMATION.

BUT THE HEAVIER FIRE FROM THE GERMAN PANZERS WAS TAKING A TERRIBLE TOLL. IT WAS SOON OBVIOUS EVEN TO THE COLONEL WITH THE CONTROL TANK THAT FEW OF HIS REGIMENT WOULD SURVIVE TO GET WITHIN STRIKING DISTANCE OF THE ENEMY . . .
THE ENEMY ARE WIPING US OUT BEFORE WE EVEN REACH THEM, SIR.
YOU'RE RIGHT, CONFOUND IT. GIVE THE ORDER TO WITHDRAW.

LIEUTENANT JOHNNIE GRENVILLE'S EYES BLAZED AS THE ORDER CRACKLED OVER THE RADIO ...
ORDERS TO WITHDRAW, SIR !
I NEVER HEARD IT - AND NEITHER DID YOU ! YOU COULDN'T HAVE, WITH THIS LEAD DISCONNECTED, COULD YOU ?
I GET IT, SIR - OF COURSE NOT !

TO RETREAT WITHOUT STRIKING A SINGLE BLOW WAS UNTHINKABLE TO A MAN OF JOHNNIE'S SPIRIT .
DRIVER, SWING RIGHT. WE'LL SLIP OVER THAT RIDGE AND ADVANCE IN A FORMATION OF ONE !
RIGHT, SIR !

HULL DOWN BELOW THE RIDGE, JOHNNIE'S TANK EDGED TOWARDS THE PANZERS WHICH WERE INTENT ON HARASSING THE BADLY-MAULED TANK REGIMENT AS IT DREW BACK .
THERE'S A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES ! STAND BY, GUNNER -- AND REMEMBER IT'S GOT TO BE ONE ROUND, ONE TANK ! READY ?
READY, SIR !

FIRE!

FOR A FEW BRIEF BUT GLORIOUS SECONDS, THE LONE RAIDER WROUGHT HAVOC AMONG THE PANZER GROUP BEFORE THEIR GUNS SWUNG ROUND MENACINGLY AND BEGAN TO SPIT WHITE-HOT DEATH AT THE BRITISH TANK.

HMM ! THEY'VE REALISED WE'RE HERE ! NOW WHAT WAS THAT YOU WERE MUTTERING ABOUT A WHILE AGO - SOMETHING ABOUT ORDERS TO WITHDRAW...I THINK WE MIGHT DO THAT NOW !

THE VALENTINE TURNED BELATEDLY TO RACE FOR HOME - AND EVERY SURVIVING GUN IN THE GERMAN FORCE OPENED UP ON IT.

THE TANK SLEWED TO A HALT AS A SHELL SMASHED INTO THE ENGINE. A FUEL TANK IGNITED AND A SHEET OF FLAME LEAPED UP...
BALE OUT, LADS - THE OLD GIRL'S BREWING UP!

THE TANKMEN DASHED AWAY FROM THEIR STRICKEN VEHICLE AND FLUNG THEMSELVES TO THE GROUND, A SAFE DISTANCE AWAY...
THERE SHE GOES!
FUNNY, NEVER THOUGHT I'D FEEL SORRY TO SEE THE END OF THE OLD GIRL!
YOU'LL FEEL EVEN SORRIER TONIGHT - WHEN WE START THE LONG WALK BACK!

THE TANK BATTLE WAS OVER. AN OCCASIONAL GUN STILL THUMPED TO THE EAST BUT THE TANK SURVIVORS WERE OUT ON THEIR OWN. AT DUSK, JOHNNIE GAVE THE ORDER TO MARCH.
LET'S GET MOVING, LADS,' AND REMEMBER, KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN AND YOUR MOUTHS SHUT.'

THROUGH THE LONG HOURS OF DARKNESS THEY STUMBLED ACROSS THE TREACHEROUS YIELDING SAND. AT LAST, JOHNNIE CALLED A HALT...
OKAY, LADS. WE'LL HAVE A REST - BUT NOT FOR LONG.'
THANK 'EAVENS - I'VE BEEN WALKING IN MY SLEEP THIS LAST HALF-HOUR.'

THE WEARY TANKMEN SLUMPED DOWN ON THE COLD SAND AS IF IT WAS A FEATHER BED, BUT IMMEDIATELY, JOHNNIE STIFFENED. HIS KEEN EARS HAD CAUGHT A FAINT BUT FAMILIAR SOUND...
QUIET! I HEARD A COUGH.'

GESTURING TO THE OTHERS TO REMAIN WHERE THEY WERE, JOHNNIE GRENVILLE SLIPPED AWAY INTO THE DARKNESS A FEW MOMENTS LATER...
AN EYTIE CONVOY ' AND THREE'S THE BLOKE WHO COUGHED WITH ANY LUCK, WE'VE FINISHED WALK NG '

NOISELESSLY, THE TANK OFFICER CREPT DOWN TOWARDS THE BORED ITALIAN GUARD...

THEN, LIKE A PANTHER, JOHNNIE SPRANG!
UGH!

SELECTING THE END VEHICLE IN THE CONVOY, JOHNNIE QUIETLY RELEASED THE HANDBRAKE...

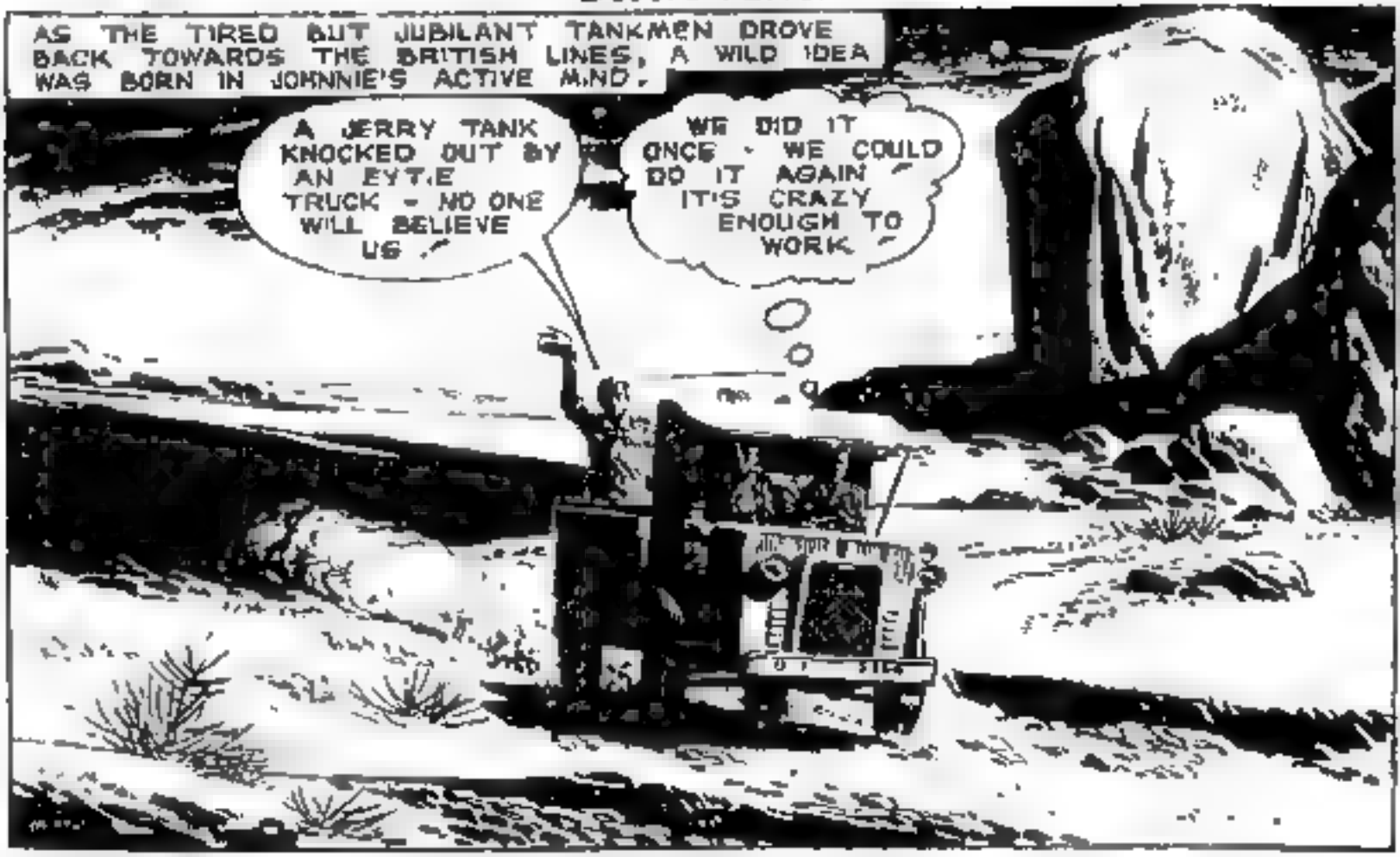
SOON, THE TANK CREW WERE CLAMBERING ABOARD THEIR NEW-FOUND TRANSPORT...
NICE GOING, SKIPPER — WHAT NOW?
WHAT ELSE — HOME - IF WE CAN FIND IT

JOHNNIE PRESSED THE STARTER AND THE SMALL ITALIAN TRUCK ROARED INTO LIFE. WITH BRAZEN EFFRONTERY, HE DROVE THROUGH THE SLEEPING ITALIAN CONVOY. THEN TROUBLE LOOMED BEFORE THEM.
OH - OH - THIS IS THE BUSINESS END OF THE CONVOY - A JERRY SENTRY AHEAD, SIR
KEEP YOUR HEADS DOWN AND PRETEND TO BE ASLEEP - I'LL TRY TO BLUFF HIM
A BURLY GERMAN GRINNED CONTEMPTUOUSLY AS HE GAZED DOWN INTO THE ITALIAN VEHICLE...
PAH! WE DO NOT OFTEN SEE OUR GLORIOUS ALLIES QUITE SO CLOSE TO THE FRONT AS THIS!
WHAT NEED WHEN THE MIGHTY AFRIKA KORPS IS DRIVING THE BRITISH BACK SO BADLY...
EXCUSE, PLEASE - WHAT IS THAT YOU HAVE IN YOUR BELT?

FLATTERED, THE SENTRY DREW THE STICK GRENADE FROM HIS BELT...
THAT'S A GERMAN GRENADE, MEIN FREUND. YOU JUST UNSCREW THE CAP AT THE END, PULL THE STRING, THROW IT - AND BOOMF
SO - SO

WITH A LIGHTNING MOVEMENT, THE OFFICER SNATCHED THE GRENADE FROM THE GERMAN'S HAND...
LET'S SEE IF IT WORKS
HIMMEL NEIN NEIN

SCARED OUT OF HIS WITS, THE SENTRY FLUNG HIMSELF FLAT ON HIS FACE AS JOHNNIE HURLED THE GRENADE TOWARDS ONE OF THE PETROL TANKERS WHICH WAS REFUELLING A GERMAN MARK III TANK.
THE NIGHT WAS SPLIT BY A BLINDING FLASH, AS THE GRENADE, THE PETROL LORRY AND THE TANK DISSOLVED IN AN EXPLOSION OF SEETHING FLAME.
COR! WHAT A FLARE-UP!
THAT OUGHT TO KEEP 'EM BUSY WHILE WE GET CLEAR!


AS THE TIRED BUT JUBILANT TANKMEN DROVE BACK TOWARDS THE BRITISH LINES, A WILD IDEA WAS BORN IN JOHNNIE'S ACTIVE MIND.
A JERRY TANK KNOCKED OUT BY AN EYTLE TRUCK - NO ONE WILL BELIEVE US
WE DID IT ONCE - WE COULD DO IT AGAIN IT'S CRAZY ENOUGH TO WORK

BUT JOHNNIE'S IDEA WAS DRIVEN FROM HIS MIND WHEN HE REPORTED TO THE COLONEL BACK AT REGIMENTAL HEADQUARTERS...
...YOU WILFULLY DISOBEYED MY ORDERS IN ACTION HANG IT, MAN — I'VE A GOOD MIND TO HAVE YOU COURT-MARTIALLED
FOR KNOCKING OUT FIVE PANZERS, SIR

WHY, YOU IMPUDENT YOUNG JACKANAPES — I WON'T HAVE YOU IN MY REGIMENT ANOTHER DAY. I'LL SEE YOU'RE POSTED BACK TO BASE GET OUT!

AT THE BASE DEPOT IN CAIRO, JOHNNIE HAD AMPLE TIME TO DEVELOP HIS PLANS FOR A HIGHLY MOBILE FORCE OPERATING BEHIND ENEMY LINES. BUT HE FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO PERSUADE ANYONE TO TAKE HIM SERIOUSLY. THEN, AT LAST, HE MET AN OLD FRIEND WHO WAS ATTACHED TO THE GENERAL STAFF.
...WE COULD HOLE UP IN THE DESERT, BELT INTO THE JERRIES AND BE GONE BEFORE THEY KNEW WHAT HAD HIT 'EM. I KNOW IT WOULD WORK. WHAT ABOUT IT, MIKE - CAN YOU GET ME TO SELL THE IDEA TO YOUR CHIEF?
ALL RIGHT, JOHNNIE - YOU'RE MAD, OF COURSE, BUT YOU'VE WORN ME DOWN.
NEXT MORNING, JOHNNIE PRESENTED HIMSELF AT G.H.Q. WITH HIGH HOPES.
...A COLUMN OF TRUCKS BEHIND THE ENEMY LINES. WE COULD BE SUPPLIED FROM THE AIR... GIVE ROMMEL A REAL HEADACHE, SIR.
HUMPH. SOUNDS A BIT IRREGULAR.
HE SEES HIMSELF AS THE RED SHADOW IN THE DESERT SONG.

WHILE THE YOUNG TANK OFFICER WAITED OUTSIDE, THE GENERAL AND HIS STAFF DELIBERATED . . .
—ONCE WE START THIS SORT OF THING, WE'LL HAVE EVERY TOM, DICK AND HARRY WANTING TO GO AND FIGHT HIS OWN WAR!
BESIDES, THE CHAP WAS POSTED FROM HIS OWN UNIT FOR LACK OF DISCIPLINE!
AMM! YOU'RE QUITE RIGHT, OF COURSE - IT'S OUT OF THE QUESTION. PITY THOUGH, I RATHER LIKED THE LOOK OF THE FELLER MYSELF!

AS HE HEARD HIS PLAN TURNED DOWN, JOHNNIE'S FACE WAS A FROZEN MASK... BUT INSIDE HE WAS SEETHING...
...SO MY ADVICE IS TO FORGET ABOUT THE WHOLE THING, GRENVILLE. CAN'T HAVE EVERYONE RUNNING A PRIVATE ARMY - GOING OFF KILLING GERMANS ON HIS OWN - WOULDN'T DO AT ALL
I SEE, SIR. THANK YOU, SIR.

JOHNNIE LEFT G.H.Q., HIS HOPES IN RUINS. THEN, AS HE WANDERED AIMLESSLY ALONG THE TEEMING CAIRO STREET, A HEAVY HAND SMOTE HIM BETWEEN THE SHOULDER BLADES.
AHOY THERE! JOHNNIE GRENVILLE, YOU OLD PIRATE
SPIKE - SPIKE EASTON!

JOHNNIE'S FACE LIT IN A SMILE OF RECOGNITION...
BOY, AM I GLAD TO SEE YOU! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
I COLLECTED THIS EYE OUTSIDE BARDIA. NOW THEY'RE SENDING ME BACK TO BLIGHTY TO COLLECT A BOWLER HAT

IN A NEARBY CAFE, JOHNNIE OUTLINED HIS PLAN FOR A MOBILE FORCE - AND FOR THE FIRST TIME, HE FOUND A RECEPTIVE AUDIENCE...
IF ONLY I COULD HAVE A CHANCE TO PROVE IT WOULD WORK!
MAYBE I CAN HELP YOU, JOHNNIE - IF YOU'LL LET ME COME IN WITH YOU! LISTEN -

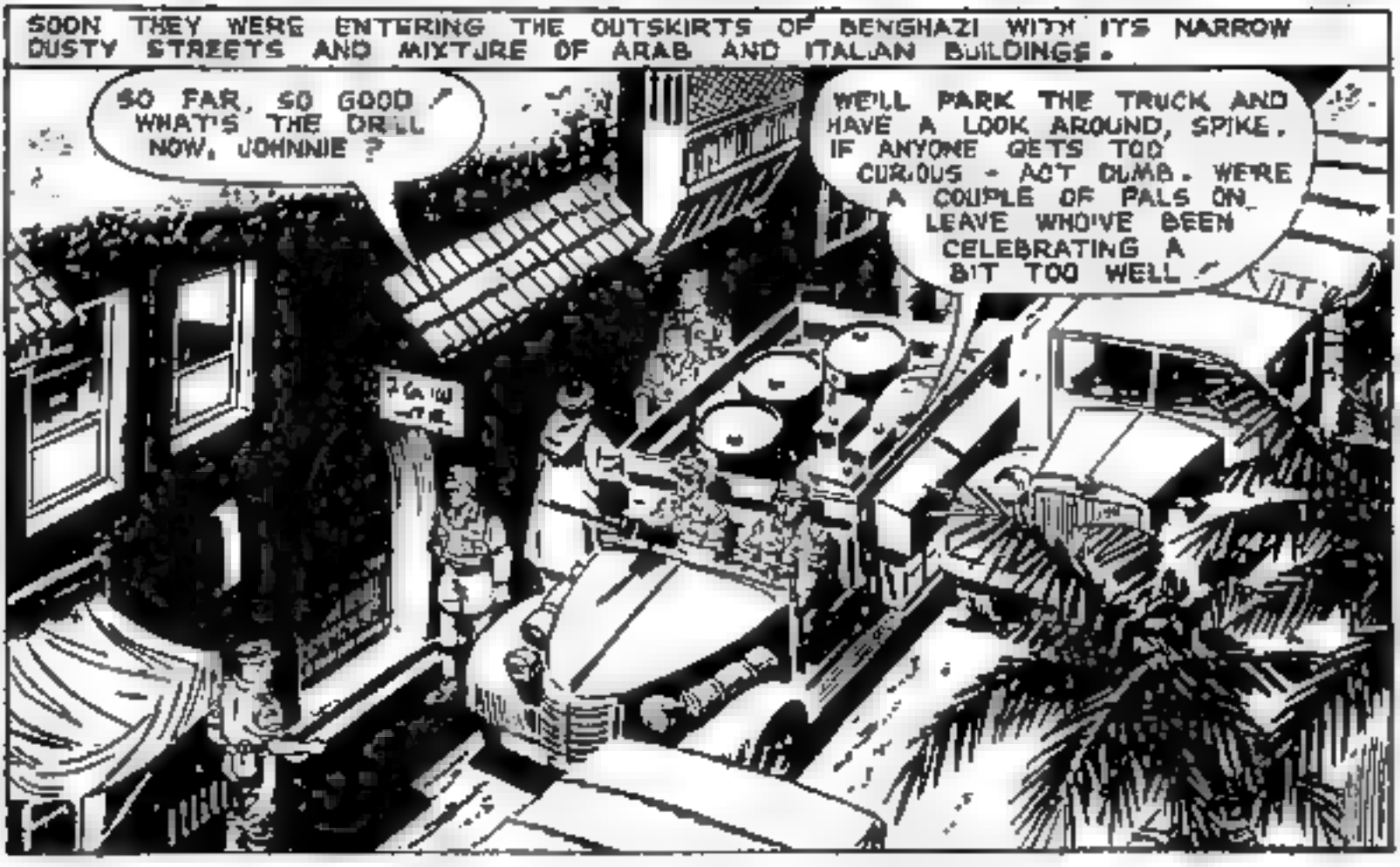
MY OLD MOB'S JUST COME DOWN FOR A REFIT. THE REGIMENTAL QUARTERMASTER IS A SPECIAL PAL OF MINE - I KNOW HE COULD LEND US A TRUCK, STORES AND AMMO FOR A SHORT SPELL. I'M MORE OR LESS 'CIVVY ATTACHED' NOW - AND YOU'VE GOT SOME LEAVE DUE...
BY JIMINY, SPIKE - WE'LL DO IT!

SPIKE WAS AS GOOD AS HIS WORD. A FEW DAYS LATER, JOHNNIE MET HIM AT THE REGIMENTAL H.Q. NEAR MENA. THERE A GRINNING QUARTERMASTER HANDED OVER A HEAVILY LOADED TRUCK
SPIKE, YOU OLD VILLAIN - THIS IS MARVELLOUS!
BETTER THANK THE 'Q' HERE, JOHNNIE. IT'S ALL HIS DOING!
THAT'S ALL RIGHT, SIR. I 'OPE YOU ENJOYS YER TRIP. EXPLORING THE SINAI DESERT, I BELIEVE YOU SAID...UNLESS YOU 'APPENS TO GET LOST!

IN THE HIGHEST OF SPIRITS THE TWO FRIENDS DROVE OUT ON THEIR WILD MISSION.
YOU'RE THE SKIPPER, JOHNNIE - WHAT'S THE DRILL? SEEK OUT AND DESTROY, EH?
NOT EXACTLY, SPIKE. WE'RE MORE LIKELY TO PERSUADE H.Q. THAT WE'RE ON TO SOMETHING IF WE BRING BACK INFORMATION THAT WILL BE OF REAL VALUE.
WE'RE GOING TO BENGHAZI. IT'S THE MAIN AXIS BASE — SO JERRY WOULD NEVER DREAM ANYONE WOULD TRY GETTING IN THERE. THEY'LL THINK OUR TRUCK IS ONE THEY CAPTURED. IF ANY JERRY CHALLENGES US, WE'LL KID HIM WE'RE EYTIES - AND VICE VERSA.

FOR SEVERAL DAYS THEY TRAVELLED WESTWARDS, UNTIL THEY WERE WELL BEHIND ENEMY LINES.
TOMORROW MORNING WE'LL STRIKE NORTH TO THE COAST ROAD — THEN BOWL ON INTO BENGHAZI. BETTER TAKE YOUR RANK TABS OFF, BY THE WAY — SOME NOSEY JERRY M.P. MIGHT SPOT THEM.
AND FROM NOW ON WE'D BETTER WEAR THOSE AFRIKA KORPS HATS WE SCROUNGED.

Chapter 2. Destination—Benghazi!



WITH BRAZEN EFFRONTERY, JOHNNIE DROVE THE DUST-CAKED VEHICLE INTO A MILITARY CAR-PARK ...
WE CAPTURED THIS THING FROM THE TOMMIES. CAN WE LEAVE IT HERE WHILE WE WASH SOME OF THE DESERT FROM OUR THROATS
JAWOHL

BENGHAZI WAS FULL OF ALL MANNER OF AXIS TROOPS RELAXING ON LEAVE AND IN THEIR FADED UNIFORMS, THE TWO BRITISHERS MINGLED UNNOTICED WITH THE THRONG . . .
WE'LL MAKE FOR THE DOCKS - WE OUGHT TO BE ABLE TO GLEAN A BIT OF GEN THERE
GIVES YOU AN EERIE FEELING MIXING WITH ALL THESE JERRIES .

SPIKE'S EYES GLEAMED WITH SATISFACTION WHEN THEY REACHED THE HARBOUR. EVERYWHERE THERE WAS EVIDENCE OF THE DESERT AIR FORCE'S ACTIVITIES
THE RAF HAVE CERTAINLY GIVEN THIS PLACE A PASTING
BUT JERRY'S STILL BRINGING PLENTY OF STUFF IN - LOOK AT THOSE GUNS

GUNS — BIG, MENACING-LOOKING GUNS OF AN UNFAMILIAR PATTERN JOHNNIE COOLLY STROLLED OVER TO ONE OF THE GERMAN DOCK LABOUR FORCE...
WHAT GUNS ARE THESE, MEIN FREUND?
THESE ARE THE GUNS THAT WILL SEND THE TOMMIES SCUTTLING HOME - EIGHTY-EIGHT MILLIMETRES THEY WILL SMASH A TANK OR SHOOT DOWN A BOMBER JUST AS EASILY

PULLING SPIKE BEHIND A STACK OF OILDRUMS, JOHNNIE FISHED OUT HIS SMALL BUT EFFICIENT CAMERA.
WHAT'S THE IDEA, JOHNNIE ?
G.H.Q WILL BE GLAD TO KNOW ABOUT THESE GUNS - AND EVEN THOSE CHAIRBORNE WALLAHS BACK IN CAIRO WON'T BE ABLE TO ARGUE WITH A PHOTOGRAPH !
GOT IT !
BUT JOHNNIE'S PHOTOGRAPHIC ACTIVITIES WERE SUDDENLY INTERRUPTED . . .
HEY ! PHOTOGRAPHY IS [redacted]EN HERE ! - YOU ARE UNDER ARREST !
THAT'S TORN IT !

MENACED BY THE RIFLE AND BAYONET OF THE SENTRY, THERE WAS LITTLE THE TWO COULD DO.
I MEANT NO HARM --
WE WILL SEE WHETHER THE HARBOUR KOMMANDANT AGREES

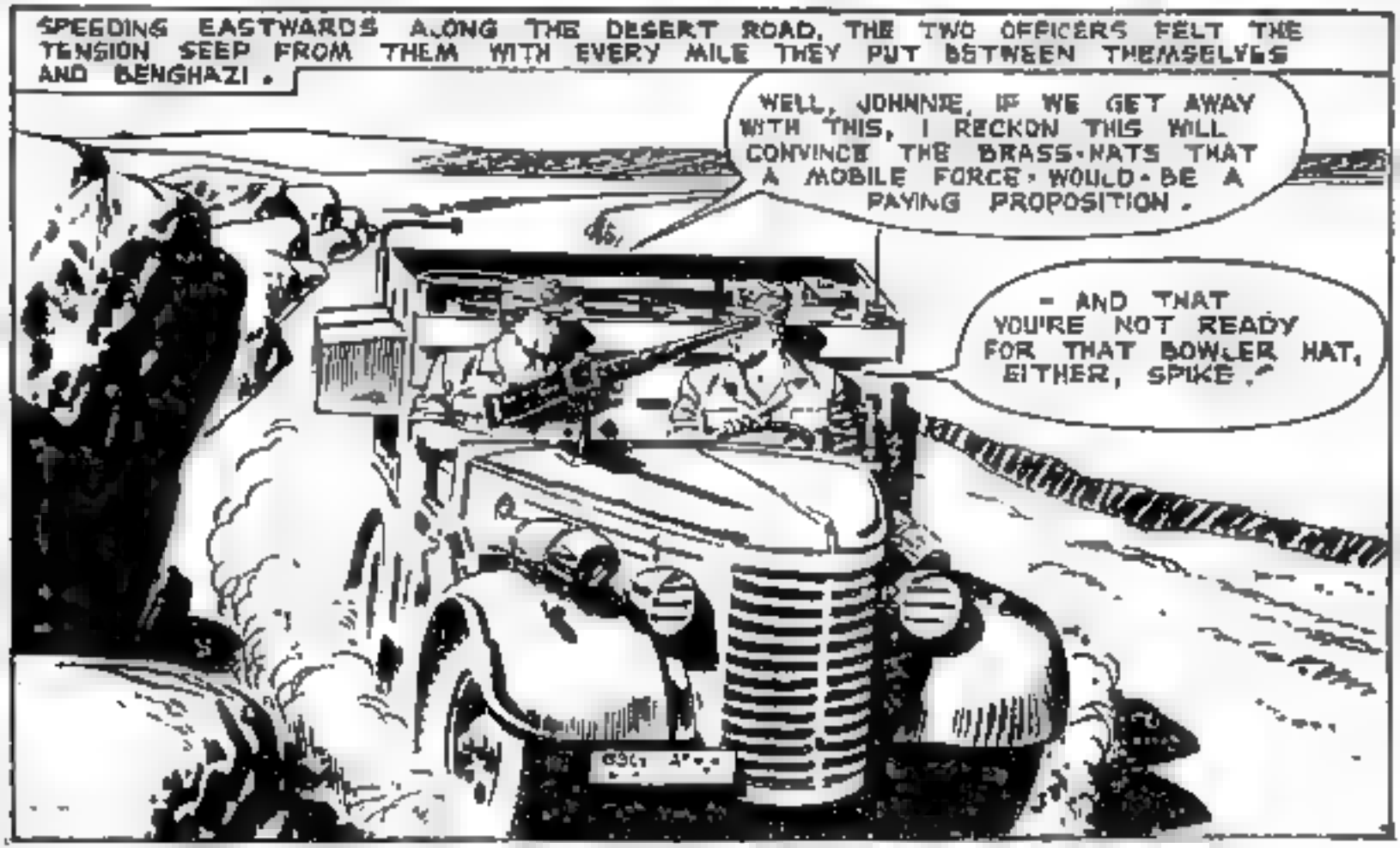
THE PAUNCHY GERMAN OFFICER IN CHARGE OF THE HARBOUR LISTENED IN SILENCE TO THE SENTRY. BUT JOHNNIE NOTICED THE GREEDY GLEAM IN HIS EYES AS HE SAW THE CAMERA.
USING A CAMERA ON THE DOCKSIDE, EH? YOU KNOW THE MAXIMUM PENALTY FOR THAT - IT'S DEATH! WHERE DID YOU GET THAT CAMERA, ANYWAY?
I AM A KEEN PHOTOGRAPHER - I HAVE MANY OTHERS BETTER THAN THIS. IF I COULD SPEAK TO THE HERR OBERST ALONE ...

THE COLONEL CAUGHT THE HINT OF A BRIBE IN JOHNNIE'S VOICE. HE JERKED HIS HEAD ABRUPTLY AT THE SENTRY, WHO SALUTED AND MARCHED SWIFTLY OUT.
WELL - I AM WAITING TO HEAR MORE ABOUT THESE - ER - CAMERAS OF YOURS
JOHNNIE'S RIGHT ARM DREW BACK AND CAME ROUND SWIFTLY IN A VICIOUS SWING TO THE JAW. THE FAT GERMAN COLLAPSED ACROSS HIS DESK WITHOUT A SOUND.
NICE WORK, JOHNNIE
THE HERR OBERST OUGHT TO SLEEP FOR QUITE A WHILE LET'S SEE WHAT WE CAN FIND HERE.
JOHNNIE RIFFLED SWIFTLY THROUGH THE PAPERS LITTERING THE DESK. SUDDENLY HE GAVE A LONG LOW WHISTLE OF TRIUMPH
WHAT YOU GOT, CHUM?
THIS IS A FIND INDEED! A LIST OF ALL SHIPPING DUE IN AND OUT OF BENGHAZI FOR THE NEXT TWO WEEKS! G.H.Q. WILL GO CRAZY OVER THIS.

WITH A GUTTURAL GROWL, AS MUCH LIKE THE GERMAN OFFICER'S VOICE AS HE COULD MANAGE, JOHNNIE CALLED THE SENTRY BACK...
GUARD - KOMMEN SIE!
HIER, HERR OBERST!
THE MOMENT THE MAN CROSSED THE THRESHOLD...
UGH!
THE TWO BRITONS STROLLED CASUALLY OUT OF THE OFFICE AND REACHED THE CAR-PARK UNCHALLENGED BUT THERE THEY RAN INTO TROUBLE!
WHERE ARE YOUR PAPERS?
- BUT WE ONLY PARKED OUR VEHICLE HERE FOR TEN MINUTES - LOOK IT'S THAT CAPTURED ENEMY TRUCK THERE!
NOBODY REMOVES A VEHICLE FROM THIS PARK WITHOUT SHOWING HIS AUTHORITY - THOSE ARE THE ORDERS! WHAT'S YOUR UNIT, ANYWAY?

THE GERMAN FIELD POLICEMAN'S EYES HAD A SUSPICIOUS GLEAM AND JOHNNIE'S HEART SANK WERE THEY TO BE BAULKED AT THE LAST MOMENT? SUDDENLY, AN OMINOUS DRONE FILLED THE AIR, QUICKLY FOLLOWED BY URGENTLY SHOUTED COMMANDS...
ACHTUNG! ENEMY AIRCRAFT APPROACHING! TAKE COVER!
BUT WHAT ABOUT OUR PAPERS?
I'VE NO TIME FOR THAT NOW, FOOL. TAKE COVER!
VERY WELL, IF YOU SAY SO -

IGNORING THE ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIRE THAT SWEPT UP AT THEM. THE TWO WELLINGTON BOMBERS SWEPT LOW OVER THE ROOFTOPS OF BENGHAZI – AND JOHNNIE AND SPIKE RACED FOR THEIR TRUCK.
GOOD OLD RAF! THEY COULDN'T HAVE TIMED IT BETTER IF WE'D ARRANGED IT BEFOREHAND.


SPEEDING EASTWARDS ALONG THE DESERT ROAD, THE TWO OFFICERS FELT THE TENSION SEEP FROM THEM WITH EVERY MILE THEY PUT BETWEEN THEMSELVES AND BENGHAZI.
WELL, JOHNNIE, IF WE GET AWAY WITH THIS, I RECKON THIS WILL CONVINCE THE BRASS-HATS THAT A MOBILE FORCE WOULD BE A PAYING PROPOSITION.
– AND THAT YOU'RE NOT READY FOR THAT BOWLER HAT, EITHER, SPIKE.

STRIKING INTO THE DESERT, THEY PICKED THEIR WAY THROUGH THE ENEMY LINES AND AFTER TWO DAYS' DRIVING REACHED THE FORWARD POSITIONS OF THE BRITISH FORCES...
HEY! WHERE VE YOU BEEN - CALLING ON ROMMEL?
SOMETHING LIKE THAT - BUT CAN'T STOP NOW. WHERE'S YOUR H.Q.?
ABOUT THREE MILES BACK, DUE EAST.

AT THE BATTALION H.Q., JOHNNIE TOLD HIS STORY TO A SLIGHTLY BEWILDERED INFANTRY COLONEL...
IF THIS IS TRUE, IT'S THE COOLEST THING I'VE EVER MET. YOU VIRTUALLY PINCH A TRUCK IN CAIRO, DRIVE TO BENGHAZI AND COME BACK WITH GEN WORTH A COUPLE OF DIVISIONS! OPERATOR.. GET ME BRIGADE -

AS A RESULT OF THE PHONE CALL, JOHNNIE AND SPIKE FOUND THEMSELVES RUSHED EVEN FARTHER BACK TO CORPS H.Q. A PORTLY GENERAL LISTENED TO THEIR ACCOUNT AND STUDIED THE SHIPPING REPORTS IN STONY SILENCE.
HMMM! SOUNDS A PRETTY TALL STORY TO ME. MAYBE YOU'RE A COUPLE OF SPIES AND THIS IS SOME CUNNING SCHEME TO ESTABLISH YOURSELVES - OR MORE LIKELY, YOU'RE DESERT CRAZY! WELL, I'LL KNOW AS SOON AS THE PHOTO UNIT HAVE DEVELOPED THAT FILM OF YOURS.
LET'S HOPE TO GOODNESS IT COMES OUT.

FOR WHAT SEEMED AN AGE, SPIKE AND JOHNNIE WAITED WHILE THE FILM WAS DEVELOPED AT LAST, AN ORDERLY RETURNED WITH THE STRIP OF NEGATIVE.
THAT'S BENGHAZI HARBOUR RIGHT ENOUGH - REMEMBER IT FROM THE FIRST PUSH
AND YOU CAN MAKE OUT THE ROW OF GUNS JUST UNLOADED, SIR - THOSE NEW EIGHTY-EIGHT MILLIMETRES.

I'M PASSING THIS BACK TO INTELLIGENCE RIGHT AWAY - AND I RECKON YOU TWO HAVE EARNED YOURSELVES A SLAP-UP LEAVE IN THE DELTA
THANK YOU VERY MUCH, SIR - BUT I'LL SETTLE FOR A SQUADRON OF TRUCKS

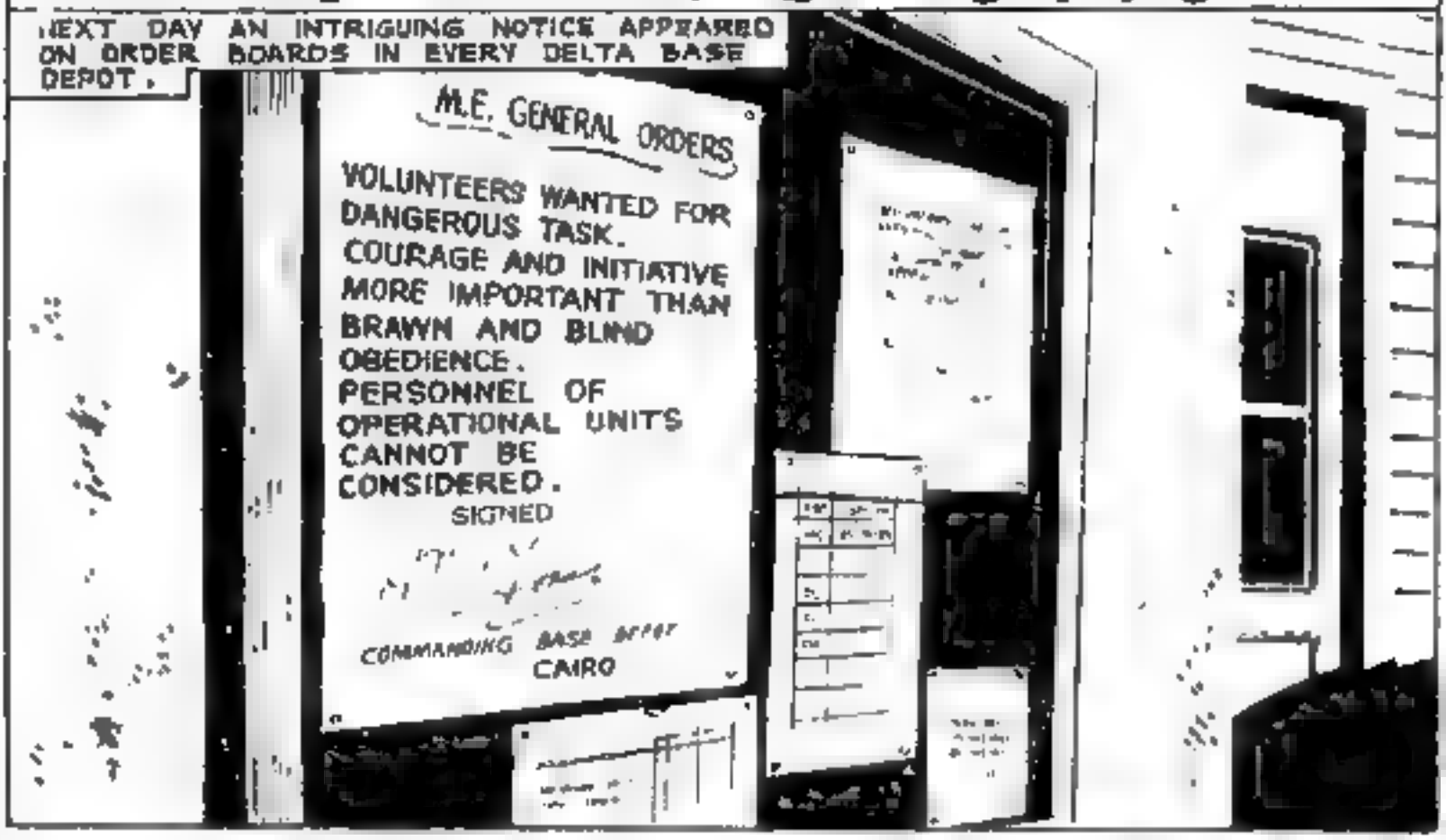
AS A RESULT OF JOHNNIE'S DARING RAID, THE R.A.F. WAS ABLE TO WREAK ENORMOUS HAVOC IN BENGHAZI HARBOUR. MANY OF THE NEWLY-LANDED 88mm GUNS WERE DESTROYED - AND FOREARMED WITH KNOWLEDGE OF GERMAN CONVOY MOVEMENTS, BRITISH BOMBERS TIMED THEIR DEADLY FORAYS TO ENSURE DEVASTATING EFFECTS!

THE BOMBER CREWS WERE JUBILANT.
THE INTELLIGENCE BOYS ARE CERTAINLY ON THE BALL WITH THEIR GEN! THE CHAP WHO GAVE US THESE TARGETS OUGHT TO GET A GONG!
GOT HER! SMACK AMIDSHIPS!

BUT IT DID NOT LOOK AS THOUGH JOHNNIE AND SPIKE WERE LIKELY TO COLLECT ANY MEDALS FOR THEIR WORK / FAR FROM IT...
ABSOLUTELY PREPOSTEROUS / THIS FELLER GRENVILLE MORE OR LESS STEALS A TRUCK AND GOES PELTING OFF TO BENGHAZI — AFTER I'VE REFUSED PERMISSION, MARK YOU / I'LL HAVE THE BOUNDER COURT-MARTIALLED /
HE DESERVES IT, SIR, I AGREE — BUT ARE YOU SURE IT'S WISE ?
CLEETHORPE'S RIGHT, SIR — IF THE PRESS GET HOLD OF IT, THEY MIGHT GET THE WRONG IDEA. HERE'S WHAT I SUGGEST...

THE STAFF OFFICER'S LIPS CURLED IN A CYNICAL GRIN AS HE OUTLINED HIS PLAN.
LET'S GIVE THE LUNATIC WHAT HE WANTS / A SQUADRON OF TRUCKS — AND A TOUGH NUT TO CRACK. IF HE FAILS, THEN WE'RE RID OF HIM AND IF HE DOES PULL IT OFF, WE SHALL HAVE THE CREDIT FOR ENCOURAGING A BRILLIANTLY DARING RAID /
EXCELLENT IDEA, BLENKINSOP /
AND WE NEEDN'T SUPPLY HIM WITH THE BEST OF MATERIAL, EITHER /

Chapter 3. Proof Positive



JOHNNIE MADE A LIGHTNING TOUR OF THE BASES, SEARCHING FOR LIKELY MATERIAL FOR HIS UNORTHODOX 'ARMY' - HE HAD LITTLE TO GUIDE HIM IN HIS CHOICE - BUT HE HAD A 'NOSE' FOR THE RIGHT TYPES...
WHAT'S YOUR JOB - AND WHAT MAKES YOU THINK YOU'D MAKE A FIGHTING SOLDIER?
I'M A PAY CLERK, SIR - JUST BECAUSE I HAPPEN TO HAVE A HEAD FOR FIGURES - THEY NEVER BOTHERED TO FIND OUT THAT I COULD READ A MAP, RAN A JUDO CLUB IN CIVVY STREET - AND WON A CUP FOR RIFLE SHOOTING!
YOU'LL DO!

OFTEN JOHNNIE FOUND THEM IN THE MOST UNLIKELY PLACES!
IF THERE'S ANYTHING I DETEST IT'S STREET BRAWLING!
AYE, BUT I REFUSE TO BE BLACKMAILED INTO PAYING TEN AKKERS FOR A SHOESHINE!
THESE DON'T LOOK THE USUAL ROUGH-HOUSE TYPES!.. HEY! LOOK OUT FOR THAT KNIFE!

BUT EVEN AS HE SHOUTED ONE OF THE SOLDIERS SLIPPED UNDER THE KNIFE-THRUST - AND THE ASSAILANT WENT FLYING THROUGH THE AIR TO CRASH WITH A THUD ON THE PAVEMENT . . .

SHATTERED BY THE DOWNFALL OF THEIR LEADER, THE ARABS SCATTERED INTO THE NIGHT.
WELL WELL - IT'S NOT OFTEN THE EDUCATION CORPS DESCENDS TO FISTICUFFS!
SORRY ABOUT THAT, SIR — BUT THERE ARE MANY WAYS OF TEACHING LESSONS, YE KEN!
AND BECAUSE WE BELONG TO A NON-COMBATANT UNIT IT DOESN'T FOLLOW THAT WE ARE RESIGNED TO OUR LOT!

THE TWO FIGHTING PEDAGOGUES WERE ADDED TO JOHNNIE'S LIST. AT THE END OF FOUR DAYS, THE NEW UN'T WAS PARADED FOR THE FIRST TIME.
IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHY WE'RE HERE, I'LL TELL YOU. IT'S BECAUSE THE ARMY THINKS WE'RE NO BLOOMING GOOD FOR ANYTHING ELSE
UP TO NOW WE'VE ALL BEEN MISF'TS. NOW WE'VE GOT A CHANCE TO FIGHT IN THE WAY WE'VE ALL WANTED TO FIGHT, AND THERE'S ONLY ONE RULE TO REMEMBER DON'T LET ONE ANOTHER DOWN
WE'LL BACK YOU, SIR
WE'LL SHOW 'EM

TRAINING BEGAN RIGHT AWAY. JOHNNIE HAD WORKED OUT A TOUGH PROGRAMME, THAT MADE THE UTMOST DEMANDS ON BRAIN AND BODY. BUT THANKS TO HIS INSPIRING LEADERSHIP, THE NEW UNIT WELCOMED THE MOST EXACTING TESTS HE COULD DEVISE FOR THEM.

THE MONTH'S TRAINING PERIOD FLEW BY WITH ALARMING RAPIDITY . . .

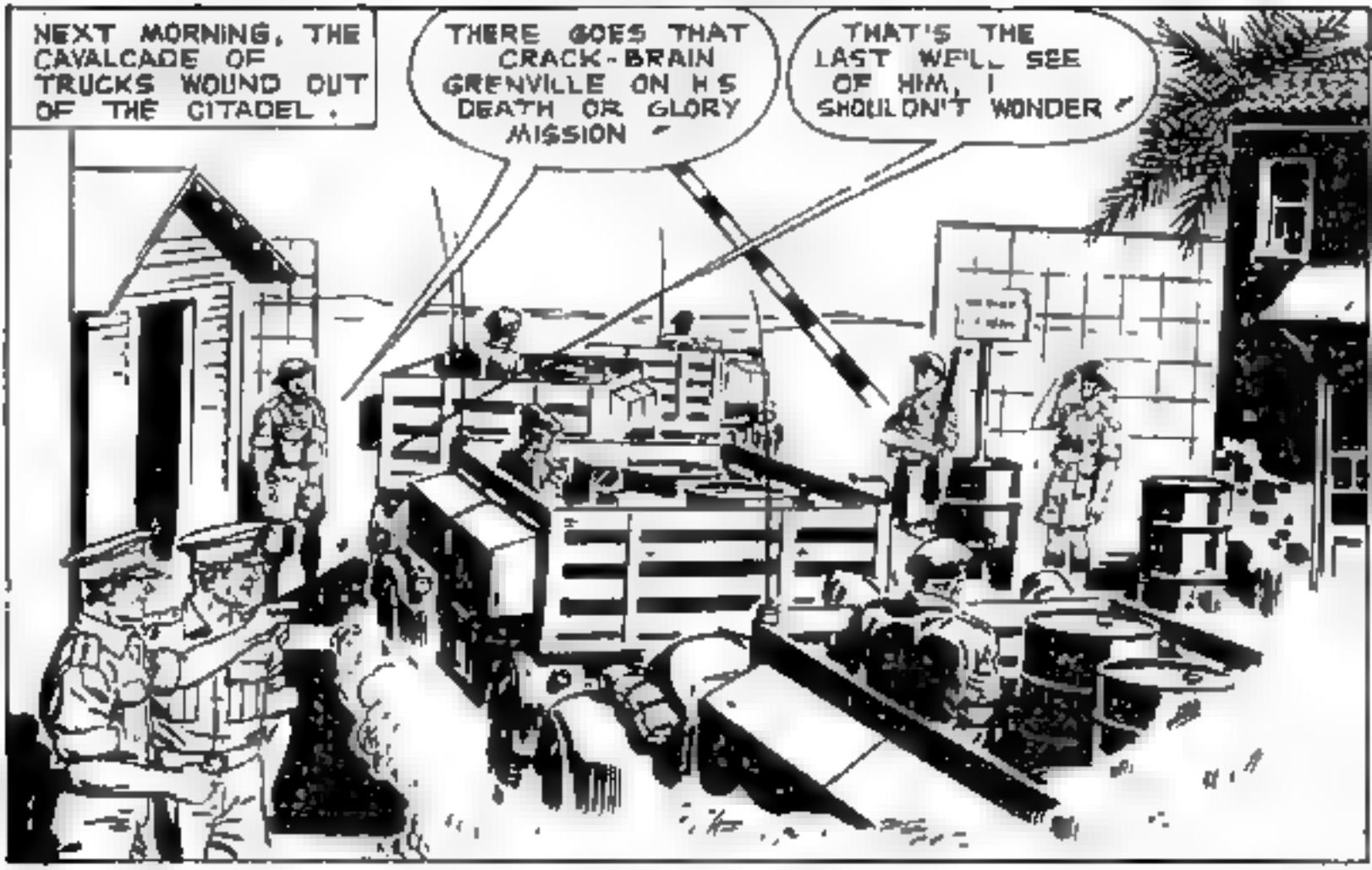
THIS IS THE LAST DAY OF TRAINING, JOHNNIE - AND YOU'VE DONE WONDERS.

THE LADS HAVE LEARNED A LOT BUT THEY'RE STILL PRETTY RAW IF ONLY WE HAD *ANOTHER* MONTH.

NEXT MORNING, JOHNNIE REPORTED AT G.H.Q. FOR HIS ORDERS.
AH, GRENVILLE! GOT YOUR MEN ALL TRAINED AND READY FOR ACTION, EH?
THEY'RE AS WELL TRAINED AS I COULD GET THEM IN THE TIME, SIR - AND THEY'RE CERTAINLY READY FOR ACTION

THE BRIGADIER'S NEXT WORDS SENT A THRILL DOWN JOHNNIE'S SPINE...
WELL, WE'VE GOT A LITTLE JOB FOR YOU.. HERE.

WE KNOW THAT JERRY INTENDS TO LAUNCH A FULL-SCALE ATTACK ON TOBRUK. WE EVEN KNOW THE DATE. HE'S BUILT UP A HUGE DUMP OF TANK AMMUNITION AND PETROL HERE. WE COULD TRY BOMBING IT - BUT IT WOULD BE A COSTLY BUSINESS AND, QUITE FRANKLY, WE HAVEN'T GOT THE AIRCRAFT TO SPARE.
IT'S AN IDEAL JOB [redacted] US, SIR


NEXT MORNING, THE CAVALCADE OF TRUCKS WOUND OUT OF THE CITADEL.
THERE GOES THAT CRACK-BRAIN GRENVILLE ON HIS DEATH OR GLORY MISSION
THAT'S THE LAST WE'LL SEE OF HIM, I SHOULDN'T WONDER

THAT NIGHT, THE MOBILE FORCE LEAGUERED WELL BEYOND AMARIYA...ON THE EDGE OF THE DESERT.
MOST OF THE TRUCKS THEY GAVE US ARE ONLY FIT FOR SALVAGE, JOHNNIE
THAT'S RIGHT, SPIKE - THE WHOLE FORCE IS EXPENDABLE. BUT WE AREN'T STOPPING FOR ANYTHING IF A TRUCK BREAKS DOWN, THE CREW STAYS WITH IT.. THE REST KEEP GOING

I'M GOING TO BLOW UP THAT DUMP IF I HAVE TO CRAWL TO IT ALONE

THE FORCE PASSED THROUGH THE BRITISH FORWARD POSITIONS AND INTO A TRACKLESS NO MAN'S LAND THAT STRETCHED FOR MILES. AT SUNRISE JOHNNIE CALLED A BRIEF HALT FOR BREAKFAST...
WE'RE THREE TRUCKS DOWN ALREADY, SKIPPER. ONE WITH THE CLUTCH BURNED OUT, ANOTHER WITH THE MAIN BEARING GONE AND THE THIRD WITH A SNAPPED PROP-SHAFT.
BETTER FOR IT TO HAPPEN NOW THAN LATER, I GUESS. BUT WE CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE MANY MORE.

AS HE TURNED TO DISMOUNT, JOHNNIE'S BODY TENSED. HIS KEEN EARS HAD CAUGHT THE DISTANT BUT OMINOUS DRONE OF AN AIRCRAFT.
AIRCRAFT ALERT!
TEN TO ONE IT'S A JERRY.

IF THEY OPENED UP AT THE INTRUDER AND HE ESCAPED IT WOULD BRING A HORNET'S NEST ABOUT THE RIEARS. THE MOBILE FORCE LEADER DECIDED ON GUILE.
IF HE SPOTS US, WAVE LIKE MAD. THERE'S A CHANCE THAT HE'LL TAKE US FOR A JERRY PATROL RETURNING TO BASE.

AS THE AIRCRAFT CAME CLOSER AND SWUNG IN TOWARDS THE COLUMN, THEY SAW THE EVIL BLACK CROSSES ON ITS WINGS . . . IT SWOOPED LOW OVER THE POSITIONS AND THE BRITONS WAVED AS ENTHUSIASTICALLY AS IF IT HAD BEEN A SPITFIRE . . .

DON'T SHOOT, JERRY - WE'RE ONLY BRITISH

NOT SO LOUD, SAM - HE'LL HEAR YOU

TENSELY THEY WATCHED AS THE MESSERSCHMITT WIGGLED ITS WINGS AND CLIMBED IN A WIDE CIRCLE . .

I RECKON T WORKED JOHNNIE

I'M NOT SO SURE I DON'T LIKE THE WAY HE'S TURNING. HE MAY JUST BE COMING BACK FOR ANOTHER LOOK - BUT STAND BY YOUR GUNS

JOHNNIE GRENVILLE'S SUSPICIONS WERE WELL-FOUNDED. THE MESSERSCHMITT TURNED AND CAME SCREAMING IN AGAIN - AT FULL THROTTLE THIS TIME AND WITH GUNS BLAZING...
THE CURSED ENGLANDERS WOULD HAVE FOOLED ME BUT KNOW WE HAVE NO PATROLS IN THIS AREA

AGAIN AND AGAIN THE NAZ PLANE STRAFED THE LITTLE FORCE, EACH TIME RAKING THEM WITH A MURDEROUS HAIL OF FIRE...
HERE HE COMES AGAIN
HE'LL COME ONCE TOO OFTEN

AND THIS IS IT !

YELLOW AND ORANGE FLAME LICKED BACK ALONG THE LENGTH OF THE MESSERSCHMITT AS IT DIVED HEADLONG INTO THE SAND. THE PATROL BEGAN TO COUNT THEIR LOSSES...
WELL, WE GOT HIM - BUT HE'S KNOCKED US ABOUT A BIT. WHAT'S THE SCORE, SPIKE ?
FOUR DEAD, SIX WOUNDED - AND THREE TRUCKS COMPLETE WRITE-OFFS ! I'D BETTER OPEN UP RADIO CONTACT !
NO !

SPIKE STARED AT HIS SKIPPER IN HORROR...

IF WE BREAK WIRELESS SILENCE, JERRY WILL SCOUR THE DESERT FOR US. WE'LL HAVE TO SEND THE WOUNDED BACK IN A COUPLE OF VEHICLES - AND PRESS ON.

BUT JOHNNIE... THE WOUNDED - THEY'VE GOT TO HAVE ATTENTION

THE BADLY-WOUNDED WERE MADE AS COMFORTABLE AS POSSIBLE ON HASTILY-IMPROVISED STRETCHERS ON THE BACK OF TWO TRUCKS.

SO-LONG, BOYS - LOOK AFTER YOURSELVES

DON'T WORRY, ABOUT US, SKIPPER - JUST MAKE SURE WE REJOIN YOU WHEN YOU GET BACK AFTER BLOWIN' THAT PERSHN' DUMP

JOHNNIE WATCHED THE TWO VEHICLES CARRYING THE WOUNDED MOVE AWAY... THEN HE TURNED TO ALL THAT WAS LEFT OF THE LITTLE FORCE.

THERE ARE TWELVE OF US LEFT, WITH FOUR TRUCKS. THE JOB WAS A TOUGH ONE BEFORE - NOW, IT'S DARNED NEAR IMPOSSIBLE. IF ANY OF YOU WANT TO GO BACK, YOU CAN - BUT THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE.

FOR A MOMENT THERE WAS SILENCE. THEN ONE OF THE DRIVERS SPAT ON HIS HANDS AND CLIMBED INTO HIS SEAT.
WHAT ARE WE WA TING FOR ? THAT DUMP S THREE HUNDRED MILES AWAY ~ LET'S GET CRACK N!
WE'RE W TH YOU, SKIPPER

FOR THREE DAYS, THE MOBILE COLUMN MOVED WESTWARDS ACROSS THE BARREN WASTE. NURSING THEIR WORN-OUT VEHICLES WITH INFINITE CARE, THEY AVOIDED ALL AREAS WHERE HUMAN EYES MIGHT SPOT THEM. AT LAST, THEY MOVED INTO HILLY, BOULDER-STREWN COUNTRY AND JOHNNIE CALLED A HALT.
THE DUMP IS ABOUT FIVE MILES FARTHER ON. WE'LL GO FORWARD AND RECCE ON FOOT
FINE, SKIPPER - I FEEL LIKE STRETCHING MY LEGS AFTER BEING COOPED UP N A TRUCK FOR SO LONG

TWO HOURS' STEADY WALKING ACROSS THE ROUGH TERRAIN BROUGHT THE FRIENDS TO A HIGH ESCARPMENT. THEY PEERED CAUTIOUSLY OVER THE EDGE. BELOW THEM LAY THE DUMP.

HOLY MACKEREL, JOHNNIE – LOOK AT THAT LOT! JUST LOOK AT IT! WHAT A LOVELY BANG IT WILL MAKE!

THERE'S JUST THE LITTLE MATTER OF GETTING IN AMONGST IT FIRST, THOUGH.

SPIKE WHISTLED IN DISMAY. NEAR THE MAIN ENTRANCE TO THE DUMP HE SAW THE UGLY, MENACING SHAPES OF GERMAN ARMOURED CARS!

ACHTUNG MINEN!

AND ON THE BARBED WIRE WERE GRIM SIGNS OF OTHER HAZARDS.

THE TWO FRIENDS EDGED BACKWARDS BELOW THE CREST...
WE COULD DEAL WITH THE GUARDS AND MINES - BUT THOSE ARMOURED CARS ARE A SNAG. THINK WE COULD LURE 'EM AWAY WITH A COUPLE OF THE TRUCKS?
NOT A CHANCE, SPIKE. THEIR ORDERS ARE TO PROTECT THAT DUMP - AND IF THERE'S ONE THING JERRY'S GOOD AT, IT'S OBEYING ORDERS.

WHY DON'T WE JUST TEAR IN HELL-FOR-LEATHER - A FEW OF US MIGHT GET THROUGH TO LAY THE EXPLOSIVE CHARGES.
- MIGHT GET THROUGH...NO, SPIKE. WE CAN'T AFFORD THAT KIND OF GAMBLE. I'LL KEEP WATCH UP HERE TONIGHT TO FIND OUT A BIT ABOUT THEIR HABITS. YOU GET BACK WITH THE LADS.

THROUGH THE LONG DESERT NIGHT, JOHNNIE KEPT HIS LONELY VIGIL, NOTING EVERY DETAIL OF THE GERMANS' ACTIVITIES.
THE ARMOURED CARS STAY PUT IN TWO GROUPS ON EACH SIDE OF THE ENTRANCE...BUT ONE CAR GOES ROUND THE PERIMETER EVERY HOUR. SOMEHOW THEY'VE GOT TO BE DEALT WITH...

IT WAS A WEARY LEADER WHO RETURNED TO THE LEAGUER AT DAWN BUT HIS EYES, THOUGH HOLLOW FROM SHEER FATIGUE, HAD AN EXCITED GLEAM.
WHAT'S THE ANSWER, SKIPPER - CAN IT BE DONE ?
I RECKON SO - BUT LET ME GET THIS CHAR DOWN BEFORE I TELL YOU HOW.

QUIETLY JOHNNIE BEGAN TO OUTLINE HIS IDEA.
THE ARMOURED CARS MUST HAVE TAKEN OVER THE JOB RECENTLY — THE CREWS ARE STILL JUMPY. NOW HERE'S THE IDEA... FIRST OF ALL WE TAKE THE SILENCERS OFF THE TRUCKS — THEN I SHALL WANT THAT ANTI-TANK RIFLE...
ANTI-TANK RIFLE...THAT OLD THING WOULD HARDLY PIERCE A PAPER BAG - THAT'S WHY THEY GAVE IT TO US
AS THE SCHEME UNFOLDED, THE LOOKS OF BEWILDERMENT CHANGED TO GRINS OF APPROVAL.

JOHNNIE WENT OVER EVERY DETAIL UNTIL HE WAS SATISFIED THAT EVERY MAN KNEW HIS TASK THOROUGHLY. PREPARATIONS FOLLOWED THEN REST THROUGH THE LONG, HOT DAY. JUST AFTER MIDNIGHT, THEY SET OFF ON THE LAST LAP OF THEIR DESPERATE MISSION.

WITH THE SILENCER OFF, THE OL' GIRL SOUNDS LIKE A SQUADRON O' TANKS.

LET'S HOPE JERRY GETS THAT IMPRESSION, TOO!

WITH ENGINES GIVING OUT A FULL-THROATED ROAR, THE TRUCKS MOVED TO WITHIN A QUARTER MILE OF THE DUMP.

KEEP CRUISING UP AND DOWN HERE TILL YOU GET MY VEREY SIGNAL. I'LL SEE IF I CAN STIR THINGS UP WITH THIS ANTI-TANK RIFLE.

RIGHT SKIPPER WE'VE GOT 'EM JITTERY ALREADY BY THE WAY THEY'RE SWINGING THOSE SEARCHLIGHTS AROUND.

DARTING FROM COVER TO COVER, JOHNNIE GRENVILLE MADE FOR THE CREST OF THE RIDGE.
I'VE GOT A LONGISH CRAWL OVER OPEN GROUND BEFORE I REACH THAT WADI I SAW LAST NIGHT

BUT THE EDGY ARMOURED CAR CREWS WERE LOOKING FOR BIGGER ENEMIES THAN ONE LONE RAIDER ON FOOT AND HE REACHED THE SHELTER OF THE WADI UNSEEN.

JOHNNIE'S SHOTS SPANGED OFF THE SIDES OF THE ARMOURED CARS. THE SEARCHLIGHTS PROMPTLY WENT OUT AND BLIND PANICKY BURSTS OF FIRE RIPPED INTO THE DARKNESS...
WITH ANY LUCK THEY'LL THINK THEY'RE BEING ATTACKED BY AN ARMOURED GROUP

HE LOBBED A GRENADE WHICH EXPLODED DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF ONE CAR. THE FRAYED NERVES OF THE CREW MUST HAVE SNAPPED FOR THE CAR JOLTED FORWARD, AND ITS GUN TURRET GROPED NERVOUSLY RIGHT AND LEFT FOR ITS ATTACKER.
THEY'RE JUST ABOUT READY TO LET FLY AT ANYTHING THAT MOVES!

JOHNNIE WAS RIGHT! A CHANCE SHOT PUNCHED INTO ONE OF THE ARMOURED CARS IN THE SECOND GROUP AND A FEW MOMENTS LATER, THEY WERE MILLING AROUND IN THE NIGHT IN A FURIOUS MELEE.

MEANWHILE, SPIKE AND HIS CREW OF TWO HAD APPROACHED THE DUMP FROM THE REAR — THERE TO PROBE A SAFE PATH THROUGH THE BARBED WIRE AND THE MINES.
RIGHT — WE'LL GIVE THE SENTRY ANOTHER TEN YARDS — THEN FOLLOW ME — EXACTLY IN MY PATH!

WITH SPIKE PRODDING THE SAND WITH HIS BAYONET, THEY INCHED SLOWLY FORWARD INTO THE MINED BELT SURROUNDING THE DUMP.
HOLD IT!

IT TOOK ONLY SECONDS TO UNCOVER THE HARD OBJECT SPIKE'S BAYONET STRUCK AGAINST IN THE SAND — A DEADLY S-MINE.

DEFTLY IT WAS MADE SAFE - AND MOMENTS LATER, TWO MORE LIKE IT ! ALL THE WHILE THE 'TANK BATTLE' WAS FILLING THE NIGHT WITH ITS NOISY CLAMOUR .
SOUNDS AS THOUGH THE SKIPPER'S DOING HIS STUFF — AND WE'VE ONLY GOT ABOUT ANOTHER YARD TO GO !

BUT AS SPIKE SLIPPED BENEATH THE FINAL WIRE . . .
ACH - ENGLANDERS !
GOOD GRIEF ! THAT'S TORN IT !

ALTHOUGH HE WAS HALF-BLINDED BY THE GERMAN SENTRY'S TORCH, SPIKE THREW HIMSELF PRONE, FIRING IN THE SAME INSTANT.

BUT AS THE GERMAN FELL, HE GRIPPED HIS MACHINE PISTOL CONVULSIVELY AND SENT A WILD BURST INTO THE NIGHT. IT WAS ANSWERED ALMOST AT ONCE.
HERE THEY COME! LUCKILY THEY WON'T HAVE ANY IDEA THERE ARE ONLY THREE OF US. WE'VE GOT TO KEEP 'EM BUSY TILL JOHNNIE CAN BRING THE TRUCKS THROUGH!
LET'S HOPE HE'S NOT TOO LONG, THEN!
AIR
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HIMMEL ! THEY ARE INSIDE THE PERIMETER ! SPREAD OUT AND SURROUND THEM .

THEN BEGAN A DEADLY GAME OF HIDE-AND SEEK. BUT THE GERMANS' GREATER NUMBERS SLOWLY AND REMORSELESSLY PINNED DOWN SPIKE AND HIS CREW.
THE BLIGHTERS ARE ALL ROUND US NOW — AND I'VE ONLY GOT ONE MAG LEFT, SIR !
YOU TWO HOLD 'EM OFF FOR AS LONG AS YOU CAN WHILE I LAY SOME CHARGES. THIS DUMP'S GOING UP, EVEN IF WE'RE NOT ALIVE TO SEE IT !

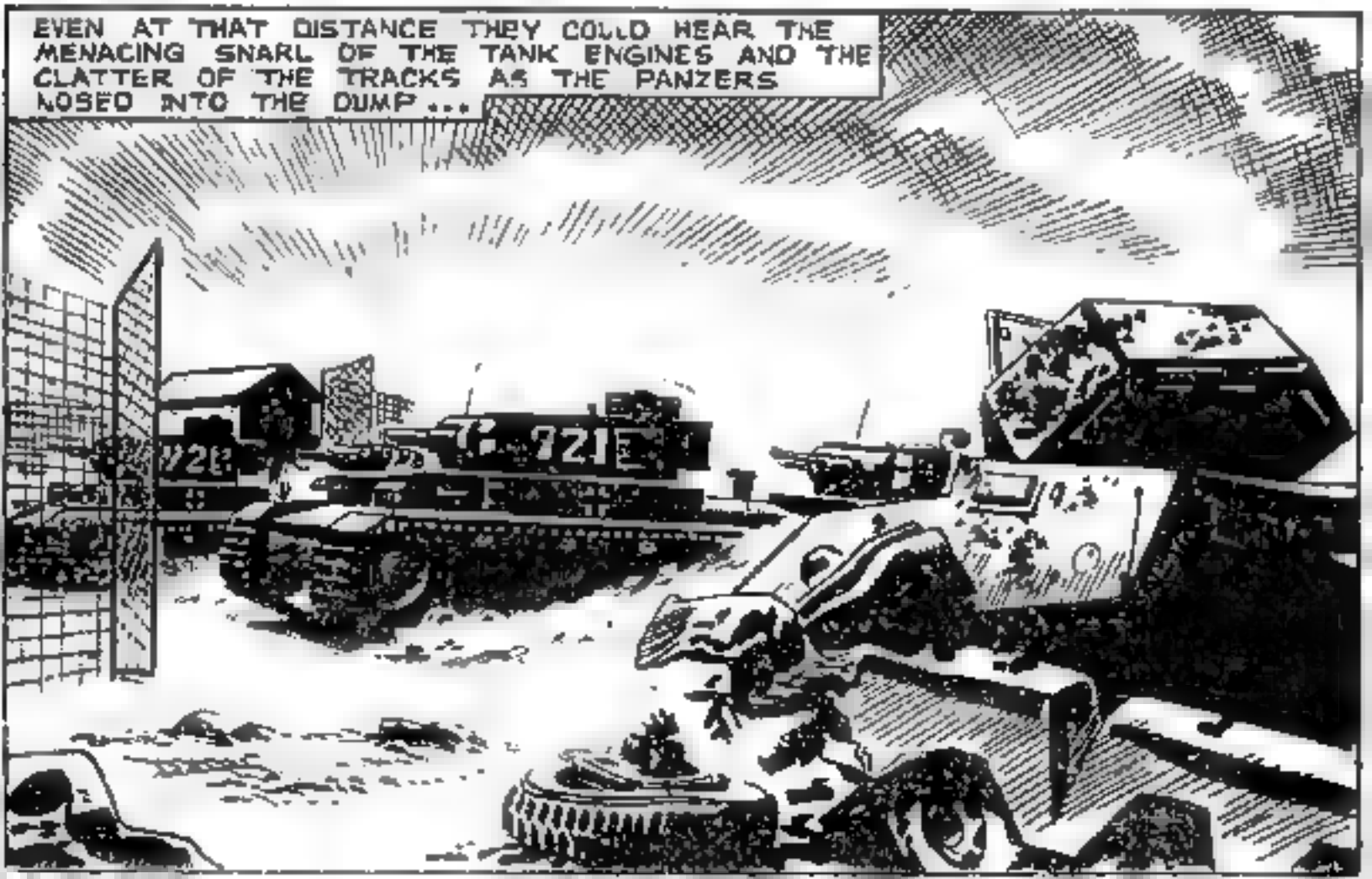
AT THAT DESPERATE MOMENT THE THUNDER OF ENGINES AND THE VICIOUS CRACKLE OF BROWNING MACHINE-GUNS DROWNED EVERY OTHER SOUND. THEN JOHNNIE GRENVILLE AND HIS TRUCKS RACED INTO THE DUMP, TAKING THE GERMANS IN THE REAR.

COMPLETELY DEMORALISED, THE SURVIVING GERMANS THREW DOWN THEIR ARMS.
JOHNNIE - YOU MADE IT - BUT ONLY JUST ...
THOSE GERMAN ARMOURED CARS TOOK A BIT LONGER TO KNOCK EACH OTHER OUT THAN I'D EXPECTED - NOW LET'S GET OVER TO THE GUARDROOM AND PLAN THE REST OF THE JOB -
AS THEY BURST INTO THE GUARDROOM...
...BEING HEAVILY ATTACKED BY STRONG FORCE OF TANKS AND INFANTRY...
HE'S BLEATING FOR HELP TO HIS H.Q. - BETTER SHUT HIM UP QUICK, JOHNNIE -
NO WAIT -

AS THE OPERATOR FINISHED SENDING, HE TURNED - TO FIND HIMSELF STARING INTO A LEVELLED TOMMY-GUN. FOR A MOMENT HE BLENCHED - THEN HIS LIP CURLED IN AN ARROGANT SNEER.
YOU FOOLS - YOU HAVE GAINED NOTHING ! IN TWO HOURS A PANZER BRIGADE WILL BE HERE !
THAT'S JUST FINE - I ONLY WISH IT WAS THE WHOLE BLOOMIN' AFRIKA KORPS ! SPIKE - START LAYING THE CHARGES - AND GIVE 'EM A TWO-HOUR FUSE !

WITH UNHURRIED EFFICIENCY, THE DESERT RAIDERS LAID THE DEADLY CHARGES AT STRATEGIC POINTS AROUND THE DUMPS OF AMMUNITION AND FUEL.
CHARGES ALL LAID, SKIPPER -
FINE ! NOW LET'S LOAD THOSE JERRIES ABOARD THAT TRUCK AND GET OUT OF HERE !

DAWN WAS BREAKING AS THE MOBILE FORCE AND THEIR PRISONERS REACHED THE ROCKY SHELTER OF THE BLUFF OVERLOOKING THE DUMP.
TEN MINUTES TO GO BEFORE THE BIG BLOW-UP.
AND HERE COME THE PANZERS - JUST IN TIME.


EVEN AT THAT DISTANCE THEY COULD HEAR THE MENACING SNARL OF THE TANK ENGINES AND THE CLATTER OF THE TRACKS AS THE PANZERS NOSED INTO THE DUMP...
721

THEN SUDDENLY THE EARTH SHOOK WITH A SERIES OF GIGANTIC EXPLOSIONS. THE EARLY SUN WAS BLOTTED OUT BY A BLACK PALL OF SMOKE, A PALL WHICH WAS TORN ASUNDER BY BLINDING SHEETS OF FLAME.
921
JOHNNIE GRENVILLE AND HIS MEN LOOKED AT EACH OTHER IN AWED SILENCE. THEN THE REALISATION OF WHAT THEY HAD ACHIEVED CAME TO THEM...
WE'VE DONE IT, JOHNNIE! BUT THERE'S NOT ANOTHER BLOKE IN THE ARMY WHO COULD HAVE PULLED IT OFF!
LET'S SEE G.H.Q. TALK THEIR WAY OUT OF GIVING US A REAL MOBILE-FORCE NOW!

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ARMS DUMP AND OF THE PANZER FORCE WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN THWARTING THE GERMANS IN THEIR BID FOR TOBRUK. IT PROVED BEYOND ALL DOUBT THAT A WELL-TRAINED, HIGHLY MOBILE FORCE COULD WREAK ENORMOUS HAVOC BEHIND ENEMY LINES.

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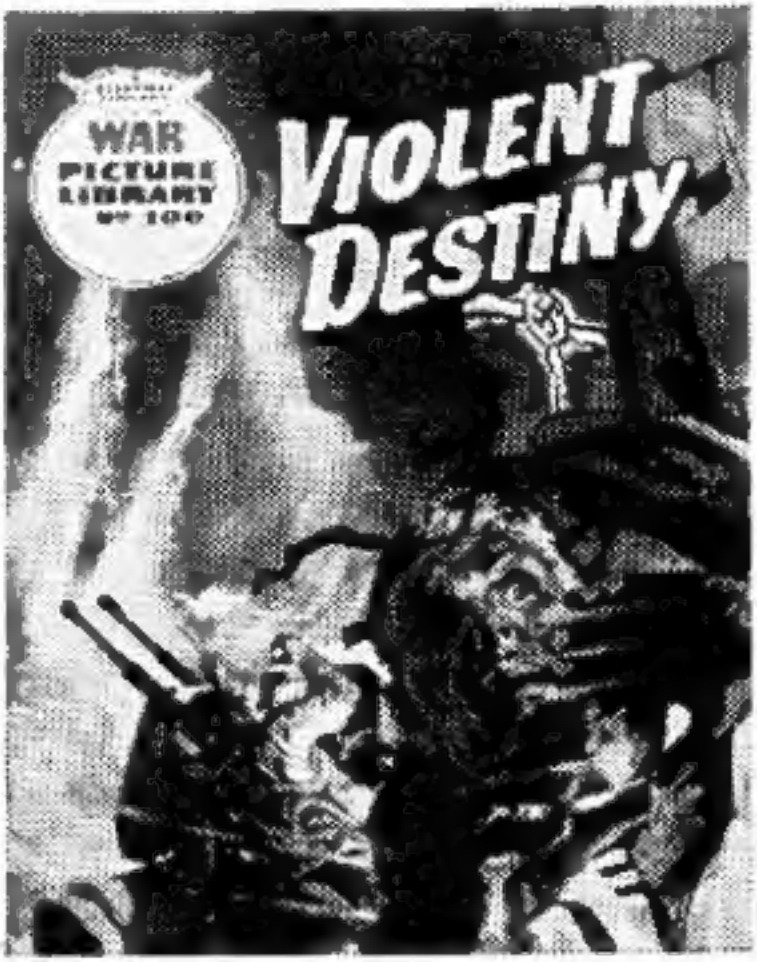

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